

oceanforlife

Unifying Cultures Connected by Our Global Ocean



Executive Summary

Ocean for Life is an international marine science and cultural exchange program created to inspire a more peaceful world, dawning from the tragic events of September 11, 2001. This vitally important program brings together students of diverse backgrounds to foster cross-cultural relationships, explore marine science, and develop a stewardship ethic for the ocean. Ocean for Life brings students to America's national marine sanctuaries, where they discover how one ocean connects us all and how, by connecting to the ocean, we enrich our lives together.

Ocean for Life is made possible through a partnership of U.S. government agencies and private entities. Since 2009, Ocean for Life has brought over 322 high school students representing 16 countries: Greater Middle East, Europe, Australia, Canada and locations throughout the United States. Following a two-week field study, students document their experiences and express their revelations through photography and video led by National Geographic Media Camp. Following the field studies, students are challenged to execute their Ocean for Life Action Plans to enhance cultural understanding and increase ocean awareness, conservation and stewardship in their local communities.

Ocean for Life alumni are ambassadors of change. By sharing their experiences with others around the globe, they are laying the foundation for a safer, more tolerant society and a healthy, more sustainable world. As we put aside our differences and work together to realize a better future, we learn another valuable lesson: When we take care of the ocean, we take care of each other.



◀ **Suzanna Hopkins, United States**

This program has put a fire in my heart to save our ocean.

Samaah Jaffer, Canada ▶

I learned that although we come in a variety of shapes, sizes and social norms, on the inside, we are all the same.



◀ **Basmah Al-Mesad, Kuwait**

The Ocean for Life experience has taught me that no matter where we are from, we have a common language: the ocean. This experience taught me so much about the ocean and how our actions can affect the ocean. It has allowed me to connect with people my age from around the world.

Ocean for Life Alumni Testimonials

Natividad Chen, Canada ►

Ocean for Life was a very different program than the typical “science camp” that I expected. I initially believed that the program would focus on the ocean and the current research on its biology and its conservation. I quickly realized, however, it was very much more a chance to learn about different cultures and the power of media in the context of ocean conservation. It was an intense eye-opening and heart-opening experience.



◀ Morgan Liston, United States

Just as biodiversity is important to the ocean, cultural diversity is important to our Earth. We truly are one world, one ocean, one family, and we must act now.



Aya Toubar, Egypt ►

The Ocean for Life program taught me lots of things, but the most important thing is how to live or act with each other because we are all friends living in one world, one ocean, without any difference.



◀ Mohammed Alawadhi, Bahrain

My experience here was something special. I learned about other people. I learned about what's in their heart.



Valerie Morel, United States ►

I learned that we must all work together to save our ocean. Even though we come from different countries, speak different languages, have different customs and different religions, we are all the same. We all depend on the ocean. We must work together to save [it].



◀ Sarah Boulhane, Morocco

With so many different religions and perspectives, we all learned in a short period of time to respect each other. I would go even further and say LOVE each other.



Karissa Vincent, United States ►

I learned from Ocean for Life that the world is all interconnected, and everything is the same, and we're all trying to come together to create something that will bring this world to a better place than it is right now.



Increasing Cultural Understanding

Following the Ocean for Life field study, 79% of student participants said they believe their perceptions about other cultures were changed as a result of the program, and 100% agreed that Ocean for Life helped them build relationships with peers they would not have met otherwise.



New friends: Ellie from Michigan, Amira from Egypt and Noaf from Bahrain. Photo: Bryanna Flame, American Samoa



Students engage in hands-on marine science activities. Photo: Alhassan Omar, Egypt

Cultivating Ocean Advocates

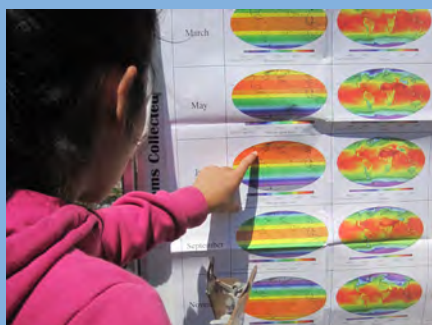
Through their participation in the Ocean for Life field study, 100% of students said they gained knowledge of ocean conservation and stewardship, and 96% developed a better understanding of how their local actions impact the ocean, no matter where they live. Additionally, 88% of participants agreed that the program made them feel they are advocates for ocean conservation and stewardship.

Youth Views on Climate Change

Prior to and following the Ocean for Life field study, 100% of student participants agreed that climate change is real and happening, and that human activities are contributing to and accelerating climate change. Also, 100% said they believed that climate change has consequences for the ocean (including national marine sanctuaries), people and the planet. All of the participants are worried about climate change and how it may impact their lives, as well as how it may impact future generations, and the ocean.



Ocean acidification was discussed through a full day of lectures and hands-on modules. Photo: Ellie Burck, Michigan



Hands-on learning engages students in better understanding the world's ocean. Photo: Gina McGuire, Hawai'i

Understanding the Interconnectedness of the Global Ocean

Student participants' views regarding the global ocean and their connection to it changed as a result of the Ocean for Life program. Following the field study, 100% of the students said they believe the health of the ocean and the actions of humans are interconnected, 96% agreed that choices made by their household can help improve the health of the ocean, and 100% now realize that we are connected to the ocean in many important ways.

Enhancing Ocean Literacy

In total, 96% of student participants agreed that watersheds are major ways through which pollution enters the ocean. This demonstrates a 36% increase in students strongly agreeing with this statement following the Ocean for Life field study. Also, prior to the field study, 75% of students said they have the knowledge to teach their friends, family and community about issues facing the ocean, whereas following the field study, 96% of students agreed with this statement.



Natasha of Pakistan immerses herself in the Pacific Ocean. Photo: Emiliano Valle, Florida



Science-, environment- and conservation-based careers are highlighted. Photo: Ellie Burck, Michigan

Pursuing Studies and Careers in Conservation

Following the Ocean for Life field study, 100% of participants said they would like to be involved in activities that focus on marine conservation, protection or restoration, while 71% have plans to pursue studies or a career related to marine conservation.



Students capture photos and videos of their field experiences to create media projects. Photo: Sally Pryor, Virginia

Promoting Conservation through the Lens of a Camera

Following the Ocean for Life field study, 93% of student participants reported they felt comfortable creating media projects (photo, video and narrative) to educate people in their communities about marine issues and cultural understanding upon their return home.



Stewardship activities like this beach clean-up engage students in making change in their local communities. Photo: Claire Fackler, NOAA

Changing Behavior for a Better Future

Following the Ocean for Life field study, 96% of participants said they will try to learn what they can do to help solve environmental problems, which is an increase from 86% prior to the field study. There was an 11% increase in students stating they would talk to others about environmental issues, and 79% of students agreed they would try to convince friends to act responsibly toward the environment. As a result of the program, there was a 25% increase in the number of students who pledged to participate in coastal or ocean stewardship activities such as beach clean-ups.

Ocean for Life Student Achievements

- Elizabeth Boeck of California has been studying Arabic and the culture of the Middle East, along with pursuing her degree in environmental science and international relations at Northwestern University in Illinois.
- Wiame El Bouhali of Morocco petitioned her neighborhood to start recycling, as well as initiated the first environmental club at her high school. She is now attending Smith College in Massachusetts.



Students connect in a meaningful way during the Ocean for Life program. Photo: Bryonna Flame, American Samoa



Multicultural youth experience a sense of adventure together while exploring islands by boat. Photo: Erica Knox, Illinois

- Brijonnay Madrigal of Washington State planned a Culture Week at her high school, where each day represented a different culture with food, music, presentations and dance. She said she feels that the event promoted appreciation of different cultures at her school, and that she has started a tradition that will continue long after she has graduated.
- Shaizal Sohail, Humaira Saeed, Syed Shah and Sanan ul-Hasnain of Pakistan made an Ocean for Life and environmental stewardship presentation to the Ministry of the Environment, as well as planted over 75 tree saplings at their school.
- Erica Knox of Illinois hosted a presentation about ocean acidification followed by hands-on activities for students at the Shedd Aquarium to emphasize this important issue facing the global ocean. She also published an article in her school's newspaper about reviving recycling.
- Jacob Winnikoff of California has put his passion into action by creating an after-school program called Blue Planet Outreach Project that engages elementary school students in learning about ocean science.
- Hala Zahr of Lebanon continues to work with her school principal to encourage the use of reusable water canteens to help eliminate single-use disposable plastics on her school campus.
- Brooke Liston of Florida conducted a presentation to 200 middle school students highlighting cultural understanding, ocean conservation and stewardship with the help of her friend Bader Naser Al-Habib of Kuwait via Skype.



Students work together to reach for their goals. Photo: Jenna Driscoll

- Noaf Al-Murabiti of Bahrain worked with hundreds of students during the annual “Green Walk” event in her country, and led a station called “The Impossible Goal” based off an activity during the 2011 Ocean for Life field study that gets students thinking about how to reach their long-term goals.



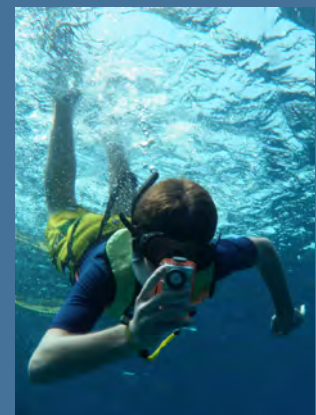
Ocean for Life field studies help bridge the cultural divide. Photo: Alhassan Omar, Egypt

- Emiliano Valle of Florida hosted two cultural sharing evenings in his community and shared the new scientific knowledge he gained through the Ocean for Life program with his oceanography team.



New experiences help build relationships. Photo: Matt Moyer, National Geographic Photo Camp

- Omar Mansour of Jordan studied how to reduce the amount of energy used in his school buildings in Amman and how to improve efficiency and promote conservation of electricity and water.
- Inspired by Ocean for Life, Natividad Chen of Canada has studied Introductory Arabic at Brown University in Rhode Island, and contributes short videos for her professor’s NSF-funded science blog Creaturecast.org. She also has a paper titled “The Importance of Climate Literacy” published in a Brown University science magazine titled “the Catalyst.”
- Grace S. Park of Wisconsin started a student organization on the campus of University of Chicago in Illinois involving ocean biology, ecology and global initiative.
- Alexis Mukaida of Hawai‘i organized an environmental awareness club at her school that aims to reduce their carbon footprint and shares this information through presentations to other schools.
- Natasha Khan of Pakistan held a garbage clean-up in her school and wrote an article about Ocean for Life that was published in her school newspaper.
- Devan Gann of Tennessee created a video to encourage her classmates and school to recycle to ensure their plastic doesn’t impact the ocean and wildlife.
- Emily Goldstein of Kentucky has given numerous presentations about her Ocean for Life experience to groups, such as the Environmental Educator’s Committee of the Partnership for a Green City, Louisville Zoo and Kentucky Association of Environmental Educators. She has also studied orca whales in British Columbia, Canada, serving as a mentor for students from around the world, including Japan and France, and has been to the Arctic twice.



Underwater experiences enhance ocean literacy. Photo: Nicolas Lemoine, France



CHANGE THE LIFE OF A TEENAGER

by giving to the Ocean for Life program, where students have amazing experiences that challenge them to think about ocean conservation and their world in a global way.

DONATE NOW

Allison Alexander, Vice President
National Marine Sanctuary Foundation
8601 Georgia Avenue, Suite 501, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
Phone (301) 608-3040 ext. 3 | Email allison@nmsfocean.org

The Ocean for Life program is a partnership between the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, The GLOBE Program and the National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, in collaboration with National Geographic Society and American University's Center for Environmental Filmmaking



Understanding the ocean and how we are all interconnected promotes closer, stronger relationships.



National marine sanctuaries can serve as the neutral environments needed to bridge cultural divides.



Problems facing the ocean today cross national boundaries and require global solutions.